

A closer look at debt relief

PSI and affiliated unions can take heart from the fantastic union/NGO alliance that has driven the [Global Call to Action Against Poverty](#). It is a campaign that has inspired (literally!) hundreds of millions around the world. Last months package on debt relief, however, came with some worrying conditions. To qualify for relief, developing countries must “ boost private-sector development” and eliminate “ impediments to private investment, both domestic and foreign” . PSI has written to affiliates in the G8 countries to ask for their help in pressuring governments, and has written directly to the International Financial Institutions. *We need to get these conditions changed!*

Privatising health support services

What does a society give up – and take on – when cleaning, laundry, food, and security services in health care facilities are outsourced? The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has published a new study on contracting-out, showing how it hurts health support workers and health care in general. British Columbia has seen the most sweeping privatization of health support services in Canadian history; 8,500 public sector jobs have been lost, and pay rates have been cut by more than 40%. The “ new” jobs are substandard in all respects, and this study shows how contracting out endangers the workers’ health as well as the well-being of the patients they serve. Copies can be requested from communications@world-psi.org

Nature for sale?

Preventable water-related diseases kill 5 million people per year, 4 million of them children. About 1.2 billion lack access to safe water and 2.4 billion have inadequate sanitation. Investment in water would save about 125 billion dollars a year in medical expenses and productivity costs. But the public are not being allowed to address the problem - the poor are losing access to even the most basic services as profit-oriented transnational water companies move in. Friends of the Earth has published a report looking at the terrible consequences of privatising water and biodiversity in 34 countries. Copies are available (in English) from communications@world-psi.org

PFI failing all round

The UK's "private finance initiative" (PFI) is a scheme which allows private corporations to build and run public services and lease them back to the government. The scheme is going so badly wrong that there is now talk of "an Enron-style disaster" in the public sector. The Guardian reports this month on expensive disasters in the National Health System; council housing; vehicle testing; airport terminal and bridge construction; military training and mental health services. See:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Columnists/Column/0,5673,1516043,00.html>.

New PSI Utilities Network

PSI is establishing an electronic network for affiliated unions working in the water, waste and energy sectors. This will enable unions to post information and questions in an electronic discussion forum, and to read about other unions' issues and campaigns. Other networks are also in development. See www.world-psi.org/networks or email david.boys@world-psi.org for more.

ILO Conference 2005

Alan Leather, PSI Deputy General Secretary, addressed the 93rd International Labour Conference in Geneva on 13th June. He raised a number of key concerns facing public service workers, including the role the WTO and World Bank regarding core labour standards, the importance of the developing quality public services in the context of the **Global Call for Action Against Poverty** and the increasing problems of trade union rights for public sector workers. See below for more. The PSI speech is accessible at www.world-psi.org/ilo

► Young workers heard at Conference

PSI helped ensure the inclusion of some key texts on public services during the ILO discussion on youth employment (ILO Conference, May 30 to June 16). To find out more check out the link from the PSI homepage: www.world-psi.org/

► ILO to visit Colombia

The Workers Group welcomed the decision to send a high level visit to Colombia, with a delegation including the President of the Committee on Freedom of Association and the workers' and employers' spokesperson. Global unions met to plan workers' group input into the delegation and review follow-up on the recommendations of the SOS Colombia mission which took place in September 2004. For more information contact PSI Equality and Rights Officer, Nora Wintour: rights@world-psi.org

► PSI meets government delegations

PSI met the government delegation from Mozambique to express concern at the slow pace of

labour law reform. The public employees union SINAfp has been organising members under difficult circumstances. The Minister of Labour expressed her wish to strengthen social dialogue in the public sector and indicated she had already begun to review the issue.

PSI also met with the government delegation of Kenya in relation to the current industrial dispute in the public sector. The Union of Kenyan Civil Servants (UKCS) had called for strike action in pursuit of a major wage claim. The strike had been declared illegal and the Public Service Minister was threatening mass dismissals. The Minister of Labour expressed interest in facilitating a negotiated solution to the conflict, although the situation remains very difficult.

► **Australia breaching ILO conventions**

“It is no exaggeration to state that, in Australia, there is no right to collectively bargain”, said ICFTU President Sharan Burrow at the ILO Conference. She explained various ways in which the federal government is breaching ILO conventions. Things are about to get worse, too, with proposals including:

1. A wage freeze for 1.6 million low-paid workers
2. Removal of unfair dismissal protections
3. A strategy to push workers onto individual contracts
4. Effectively abolition of state industrial relations systems and awards.

See www.actu.asn.au/public/news/1118377855_18327.html for more.

Urgent Action: Colombia

PSI is appealing to its affiliates to write letters to the Colombian government to protest at the recent death threats issued against a trade union leader of PSI affiliate SINTRAESMDES, Rafael Antonio Ovalle Archila, as well as against other trade union leaders of the Santander Branch of the trade union centre, the United Workers Centre (CUT). Email rights@world-psi.org for information.

The GATS power play

PSI led an intensive lobbying process during the recent round of GATS negotiations in Geneva.

Along with other global unions and NGOs we met with a dozen delegations who were engaged in services negotiations: the USA and EU, Brazil, India, South Africa, Malaysia, Venezuela, Chile, Thailand, Indonesia, Mexico and Rwanda. Earlier, in an unprecedented display of unity, more than 150 unions and NGOs sent a joint statement to all WTO member states, and the WTO itself, calling on them to reconsider their role in the current negotiations. The group felt it was indefensible to proceed with the negotiations in the name of development. “ This process is fraudulent, flawed and deeply unfair. Access to essential services and the livelihoods of millions of people in the developing world are at stake,” said PSI General Secretary Hans Engelberts. For more see www.world-psi.org/powerplay

The real cost of ' free' trade

New research from **Christian Aid** shows that sub-Saharan Africa is a massive US\$272 billion worse off because of ' free' trade policies forced on them as a condition of receiving aid and debt relief. Two decades of liberalisation have cost sub-Saharan Africa roughly what it has received in aid over the same period. The amount lost would have been sufficient to wipe out all of sub-Saharan Africa' s debt and allow all of its children to be vaccinated and go to school. The report is available from the PSI website (English only) or on request by emailing: communications@world-psi.org

Members Only

The PSI Steering Committee minutes can be downloaded from here: <http://www.world-psi.org/executive>. The Health Services Task Force minutes are available here: <http://www.world-psi.org/hstf>. You will need your PSI password for this – if you have problems, or would like a hard copy posted to you, please contact communications@world-psi.org or phone +33 (0)4 5040 6464.

New to the News?

This may be the first time you have received PSI World News by email. If you do not wish to do so again, please reply with the word **unsubscribe** in your message.

PSI World News is brought to you by Public Services International
www.world-psi.org communications@world-psi.org
Tel +33 (0)4 5040 6464 Fax +33 (0)4 5040 7320
45, avenue Voltaire BP9 01211 Ferney Voltaire Cedex France
© 2004 Public Services International (PSI). All rights reserved.